

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3059
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL
ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS (BY POUCH)

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CA
SUBJECT: FEDERAL LEADERS' REACTION TO QUEBEC WHITE PAPER

REF: OTTAWA 2314

1. DURING PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION PERIOD APRIL 4, PM TRUDEAU OFFERED FIRST VIEWS ON QUEBEC'S LANGUAGE WHITE PAPER. ALTHOUGH HE FELT MOST OF PQ WHITE PAPER LANGUAGE PLAN WOULD BE CONSTITUTIONAL, HE TERMED STEPS ENVISAGED TO REALIZE PLAN "REGRESSIVE".

2. PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE (PC) OPPOSITION LEADER CLARK, INITIATING CONSTITUTIONALITY DISCUSSION, QUERIED TRUDEAU AS TO "WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA INTENDS TO BECOME FORMALLY INVOLVED IN THE DISCUSSION". TRUDEAU REPLIED: "NO, WE HAVE NOT CONTEMPLATED THAT. I WOULD GLADLY ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT. I AM SURE MY MINISTERS WILL FEEL FREE TO COMMENT ON IT AS IT MIGHT AFFECT THE RIGHTS OF CITIZENS OF QUEBEC. WE DO, HOWEVER, CONSIDER IT TO BE A WHITE PAPER, NOT LEGISLATION AS OF YET. WE VERY MUCH HOPE THAT THAT WHITE PAPER WILL CHANGE

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IN SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS BEFORE IT IS MADE INTO LAW".

3. CLARK CONTINUED ASKING "WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER OR THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE HAVE REQUESTED THE LAW OFFICERS OF THE FEDERAL CROWN TO STUDY THE WHITE PAPER (AS TO ITS CONSTITUTIONALITY)". TRUDEAU REPLIED "AT THIS STAGE, I DO NOT THINK THERE IS ANYTHING THAT THE LAW

OFFICERS OF THE CROWN CAN DO ABOUT A WHITE PAPER WHICH IS MERELY AN EXPRESSION OF INTENTIONS AND NOT A LEGISLATIVE ACT IN ITSELF".

4. IN RESPONSE TO LATER OPPOSITION QUESTION, TRUDEAU SAID, "I REPEAT THAT WE TOTALLY AGREE ON THE BASIC PRINCIPLES TO MAKE AN ORIGINAL CULTURE OUT OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC. IT IS ON THE MEANS TAKEN THAT, IN OUR VIEW , PARTIAL DISAGREEMENT EXISTS. . . I DO NOT SEE WHAT THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC WOULD STAND TO GAIN THROUGH INDEPENDENCE SINCE 99 PERCENT OF THE WHITE PAPER COULD PROBABLY BE ACHIEVED WITHIN THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION".

5. COMMENT: TRUDEAU'S ANSWERS STAKE OUT MIDDLE GROUND, CRITICIZING PQ GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER, ON ONE HAND, BUT ADOPTING WAIT-AND-SEE STANCE UNTIL LEGISLATION FOLLOWS, ON OTHER HAND. AT THE LEAST, THIS GIVES FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TIME TO PLOT ITS NEXT MOVE WHILE LETTING ITS GENERAL DISSATISFACTION WITH THRUST OF PQ LANGUAGE POLICY BE KNOWN. ENDERS

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